

THE

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SWIMMING BATHS

OF

LONDON.

BY

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THE SWIMMING BATHS OF LONDON.

SWIMMING is an exercise at once healthful, pleasant, and useful. The full hygienic effects of swimming can only be obtained when it is practised in the open air, and in unpolluted water of a natural temperature. In a close, more or less imperfectly ventilated room, and in water artificially heated, from which, consequently, the air has been partially expelled, swimming, while still retaining its characters of pleasantness and utility, ceases to be a hygienic agent of any considerable power. Every town which aspires to be considered at all perfect in its sanitary arrangements should possess ample swimming baths of pure water in the open air. The seaside towns of this seagirt land are provided by nature with a most exquisite description of swimming bath in the ever-changing, ever-fresh sea—ever-fresh, that is, when not polluted by the drainage of the town, as often happens. But our inland towns are not so well off, and unless in the neighbourhood of a lake or a river, they must construct artificial baths or do without them. Even when they have a lake or a river they too often allow it to be so polluted by sewage as to render it unfit for bathing purposes; and when they have neither lake nor river, they too often neglect to provide artificial substitutes, thus depriving themselves of a powerful hygienic agent, a pleasant recreation, and a useful accomplishment.

The healthful effects of swimming in cold water in the open air result from the peculiar exercise, the temperature of the surrounding mediums, and the exhilaration of the spirits it causes. Before entering the water, and each time of leaving it, we enjoy an air-bath, the beneficial effects of which are not solely or chiefly dependent on the temperature, but are mainly owing to the actual impact of the atmospherical gases, and of the light, and possibly the

direct rays of the sun upon the skin. In the water, if it be considerably colder than the ordinary summer air, say 50° to 60° , there is a rapid abstraction of heat from the surface, causing contraction of the cutaneous blood-vessels, and expulsion of their blood, which sometimes produces an almost painful sensation. If we then get out of the water at once, there is a rapid reaction and an intense glow, often so intense as to cause tingling over the whole surface, accompanied with visible redness, owing to the sudden reflux of the blood into the cutaneous vessels. If, however, we remain in the water in spite of the painful sensation caused by the first action of the cold, this gradually subsides, and if the water be not very cold, and our reactive powers good, and we keep ourselves always moving, the blood gradually returns towards the cutaneous surface, and we thus become accustomed to the low temperature, and can remain a considerable time in the water that seemed at first too chilly to be borne. When we then come out of the water we do not perceive any sudden reaction, but unless we have remained too long in the water, we only feel refreshed and invigorated.

The exercise in swimming is quite peculiar. The body and limbs being completely supported by the medium in which they are immersed, the muscles are not employed in supporting their weight, consequently their movements have a freedom not enjoyed in any other exercise, and are attended with little or no fatigue. This is, however, only the case with experienced and confident swimmers, swimming deliberately and at their ease. The inexperienced swimmer finds the exercise very fatiguing. This, I believe, is chiefly owing to his unconscious efforts to keep more of his body out of the water than would be effected by its own natural buoyancy. The experienced swimmer lets the water do all the supporting business, and consequently swims deeper than the tyro. Very rapid swimming, of course, will soon exhaust even the most experienced swimmer, just as any other violent exercise will exhaust. The quickest swimmers show very little above the water when swimming a race. Most swimmers when making a spurt throw themselves on one

side. If on the right side, they make a downward stroke with their right arm, then a horizontal stroke with their left, and lastly the legs are forcibly extended, during which last movement their right arm is stretched in front as a cutwater, and the nose and mouth brought to the surface for respiration. Swimming on the left side is done in the same way, *mutatis mutandis*. In this kind of swimming the only parts of the body visible above water are a small portion of the face, and that only for a short time, and occasionally the left shoulder and arm to the elbow. It has a very ridiculous appearance, and as the swimmer from his position cannot see in front of him, it often happens that two competitors in the races that take place in our short swimming baths will, when swimming in opposite directions, run their heads full tilt against one another to their mutual discomfiture. But it is not this sort of swimming I mean, when speaking of swimming as a hygienic agent, a pleasant recreation, or a useful art. It so happens that swimming competitions are confined almost entirely to rapidity of swimming, and everything is sacrificed by competitors to quickness. The kind of swimming cultivated by our swimming athletes, whether amateur or professional, is neither graceful nor salubrious, and its utility, except for gaining cups and medals, is very doubtful. The secret of the hygienic effects of swimming in sea, lake, or river, is gentle exercise in a medium whose temperature excites the system to vigorous reaction. I do not attach much importance to swimming in cold water as a means of cleansing the body. There is no doubt that it does wash off the grosser impurities that accumulate about the skin, but it cannot be considered as a substitute for the daily tub with plenty of soap, by means of which only can the skin be kept perfectly clean and wholesome.

The pleasures of natation need not be dwelt on. To feel oneself completely at home in a new element, to lose the sense of ponderosity, to be able to move one's limbs in any direction through an unresisting medium, is to enjoy, for the moment, the pleasures of existence of a different order of animals. To feel not the weight of the flesh which we

often find "too, too solid" on terra firma; to dart hither and thither at will, roll over on side or back, or dive into the depths beneath us, is little short of ecstasy; we are no longer a terrestrial animal, we have entered a new phase of existence, we are a fish, our limbs are fins, and the water is our element. He who passes through life without learning to swim misses one of the purest pleasures life affords, and deserves to be drowned in a six-foot pond.

The uses of swimming are obvious. To be drowned by the upsetting of a pleasure boat within a few yards of the shore—can anything be more pitiful? To see our friend, perhaps our child, perish because we cannot swim a few yards to save him—can anything be more painful? Think of the number of lives that have been lost by inability to swim, of the number of lives that have been saved by the possession of this faculty. He who cannot swim is as far from being perfectly educated as he who cannot walk.*

But, it will be alleged, there are dangers connected with swimming. And so there are dangers connected with walking, riding, driving, railways, steamboats; but these dangers do not deter us from making use of these means of locomotion. But let us see what these dangers are. In learning to swim you may get out of your depth and be drowned:—Then learn to swim in shallow water. The cold water may give you a chill:—Not much fear of that unless you are very imprudent, but to avoid that insignificant risk you can learn to swim in tepid water. There are plenty of such baths in London and most large towns. There is the risk of cramp overtaking the most practised swimmer and sinking him suddenly to the bottom:—Swimmers do sometimes sink suddenly in deep water and so get drowned, but I doubt if they are often good swimmers, and I doubt if it is cramp that sends them to the bottom. The

* I believe that no arrangements exist for teaching our soldiers or sailors swimming (except in the training ships, whence a few of our sailors are derived), the consequence of which is that a very small proportion of the men in either service can swim. In some Continental countries, particularly France, every soldier is taught to swim just as he is taught his drill, and yet French soldiers are not nearly so much exposed to "perils of waters" as our own.

Lancet lately alluded to this subject, and suggested that it might be a sort of spasm of the respiratory muscles, whereby the air was suddenly expelled from the lungs, and the specific levity of the body being thus lost, the swimmer sank like a stone. That may be partly true, but I am convinced it is not the whole truth, nor does it explain how the catastrophe is caused. I believe the so-called cramp to be a spasm of the heart and respiratory organs, and that it is produced in this way. The swimmer may be accustomed to swimming, but he has never thoroughly mastered the indispensable first step in swimming, of committing the support of his body entirely to the water. He exhausts himself in efforts to elevate his head and shoulders above the water. As he gets into deep water these efforts, which are of the nature of nervousness, are increased; the cold of the water (to which perhaps he is unused from having hitherto practised swimming chiefly in tepid water) sends the blood in upon the heart, he feels choking, throws up his arms with a loud cry, and goes to the bottom at once. The cause of this often fatal seizure I believe to be a compound of nervous exhaustion, anxiety, and cold. It is extraordinary the difference that prevails in regard to the power of resisting cold. I have seen a man shivering and blue after five minutes in one of the tepid swimming baths, while others can remain an hour or longer in the sea and come out warm and comfortable.* A dip in cold water, even a cold sponging bath, will cause some men's extremities to die away and remain apparently devoid of circulation for hours. We can then easily imagine that the cold of the sea, or of a lake or river, may in an individual so sensitive to its effects cause such an accumulation of the blood about the heart and lungs as to produce all the phenomena observed in drowning by so-called cramp. That a certain degree of fear or anxiety is one of the causal elements is, I think, sufficiently proved by the fact, that this so-called cramp never occurs in

* The power of resisting the cold of the water often depends very much on the condition of our body at the time of immersion. If we enter the water feeling cold we soon become thoroughly chilled, but if we are warm from the heat of the weather, or still better from previous moderate exercise, we can much better resist the cold of the sea, lake, or river.

shallow water. That it is not cramp of the voluntary muscles is, I think, evident from the fact that many people do get cramp in their legs when swimming, and this, though painful, is not dangerous, for we can always throw ourselves on our back or swim in spite of the pain. I have actually plunged into deep water with a slight attack of cramp in one of my legs, but found no difficulty in keeping myself afloat until the cramp subsided. Although, until its nature is precisely understood, there will always remain some risk of accident from so-called cramp, still I believe the risk would be reduced to insignificance if those who chill rapidly, whom swimming fatigues, or who become nervous in deep water, would refrain from venturing beyond their depth until they have conquered these failings, which habit will soon enable them to do.

But the slight risks attending swimming in cold water should not deter a community from providing itself with open-air swimming places. The risk from drowning will be entirely obviated by artificial constructions on a lake or river, such as are to be found in many continental towns. English towns are for the most part entirely destitute of open-air swimming baths, and if they have suitable rivers or lakes near them it is rare, indeed, to see any portion of them inclosed for bathing purposes. London itself, with a population of three millions, is now without any regular open-air swimming bath. A noble river runs through it, but in spite of the gigantic works for intercepting and carrying off the sewage, the Thames is still such a polluted stream that no one with all his senses entire—especially those of sight, smell, and taste—would venture to bathe in it below Teddington Lock. It is true that one sees in summer many boys disporting themselves on its grimy bosom between the bridges, and I have even seen some enjoying a douche at the outfall of a sewer, but such feats will be more admired for their temerity than imitated for their propriety; and the Thames from Richmond downwards must still be considered as unsuitable for bathing. London has many lakes of more or less clear water admirably adapted for swimming purposes, but bathing is forbidden in

all these with the exception of three, and in these it is only allowed at such inconvenient hours as practically to exclude all but a few from using them. London has many canals, but bathing is forbidden in them, and though it is impossible to keep the boys out of them, they bathe in peril of being seized by some policeman and of being fined by some magistrate for "indecent exposure of the person."

In the absence or dearth of open-air swimming baths London is pretty well supplied with covered swimming baths, mostly tepid, but some few cold. With only one exception (and that because it was closed) I have inspected, and with six exceptions (four of these, because there was no water in them at my visit, two, because they were so repulsively dirty) I have bathed in all these baths, so that I can describe them from personal experience.

I shall begin with the cold baths, these being entitled to the first place by reason of their antiquity. And here let me pay a tribute of regret to the memory of the only open-air swimming bath London ever possessed, specially constructed for that purpose and available at all hours of the day—I mean the ancient *Peerless Pool* in Baldwin Street, City Road. It measured fifty yards by thirty, was built of stone, and several flights of steps led down to its bottom. It was amply provided with open bathing boxes, and was a secluded spot in a densely populous neighbourhood. Its water was clear and cold, and it was large enough and deep enough for swimming purposes. Its site is going to be built over, the more's the pity, as London is now absolutely without a real open-air swimming bath.

Old Roman Bath, Strand Lane, Strand.—The ancient Roman bath which gives its name to this bath is not the place used for bathing. It is where the spring rises. It is in a cellar, is built of brick, and is about 3 yards long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ wide. It is said to be near 2000 years old. The water, which rises at the rate of 10 tons per diem, from a spring at one end, is cold and as clear as crystal; it overflows through a pipe into the more modern bath, which is in an adjoining cellar, low-roofed, whitewashed, and obscurely lighted by a dimmed glass window. This bath is said to

have been built by the Earl of Essex in Queen Elizabeth's time. It is a basin 4 yards long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ wide; sides and bottom of marble slabs; steps leading down to it at one corner; depth about 4 feet 6 inches. Flags of sandstone surround the bath. There are seven boxes for bathers in the passage leading to the bath. The water is delightfully clear, cool, and refreshing, but the atmosphere of the apartment is rather musty and cellar-like, and the size hardly admits of anything in the way of swimming except mere paddling about.

Old Royal Bath, Bath Street, Newgate Street.—This is a very remarkable bath. It is said to have been built for Charles II, and it still bears traces of royal magnificence. The floor of the apartment is of marble, and the bath itself, which is 7 yards long by 3 wide, is made of black and white marble slabs, forming a pleasing pattern. The depth is 4 feet 6 inches, and in the middle of the bath floor is a depression or trough, making the water 5 feet deep there. In the sides of the bath are six niches faced with Dutch tiles, in which the water agitated by the bather makes a curious noise. On either side of the bath the marble floor is raised a few inches. The walls of the bath room to the height of 9 feet are covered with quaint Dutch tiles, with 4 niches for statuary on either side, also faced with tiles. Above the tiles on both sides of the room is a sort of balcony with a railing, but with no visible access to it. Higher up is an octagonal cornice, from which springs the dome-shaped roof, richly ornamented with carved stone or stucco garlands, whitewashed over and terminating in a round skylight. There is another window at the lower part of the dome. It is on the whole rather dimly lighted. The water is clear and cold and is derived from a spring. At one end of the bath steps cut in the marble floor lead to the bottom of the water. The boxes for bathers run along one side of the room, and a quaint little pyramidal mirror apparently as old as the bath serves for toilet purposes. The ventilation is good and the bath very refreshing, but not large enough for vigorous swimming.

Coldbath, Coldbath Square, Clerkenwell.—This bath, whence the name of Coldbath Fields comes, is upwards of 200 years old. Access is obtained to it by a steep narrow and dark staircase, that descends to a considerable depth below the level of the ground. The present bath was originally two baths, one for ladies, the other for gentlemen. They have been thrown into one,

which is 7 yards square, lined with marble, $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, with a deeper longitudinal depression in the centre of what was formerly the men's bath, making the depth there 5 feet, just as in the old Royal Bath. Above the marble, for about 3 feet, the wall is faced with Dutch tiles. Above this, on two sides, rises a whitewashed wall. On the other two sides runs a platform, with a railing at the edge next the bath. At the angle formed by the platform the railing is pierced to allow access down to the bath by means of marble steps. The ceiling is of wood, whitewashed, and is low. Two dim windows afford scanty illumination. There are two or three bathing boxes in the bath room, and there is a dressing room up a few steps, with benches to lay the clothes on. The water is very clear and cold, and is said to possess medicinal qualities from mineral impregnation. It is derived from a spring, and is constantly running into the bath from a lion's head in clay. It is delightfully fresh and cold, but hardly large enough for swimming comfortably in, and its underground situation is a great drawback.

Camden Swimming Bath, Hampshire Grove, Torriano Avenue.—This bath is about 20 yards long by 5 wide. It is lined throughout with plaster, and is accessible only from one end, where there are wooden steps down to the bottom. The walls, whitewashed, run sheer up from the bath on either side and at the other end. The depth is about five feet. At the entrance end is a platform and six quite open boxes like square church pews. The ceiling is on the double slope, whitewashed, and pierced by seven small skylights, which illuminate the bath but dimly.

These are all the cold plunge baths London possesses. The three first are too small for swimming purposes, and the last, though long enough, is very narrow and decidedly mean in appearance. Being all under cover and some of them quite subterranean, the air feels chilly and cellar-like, and the great charm that all swimming in cold water should possess, namely, the accompaniments of pure fresh open air and sunlight, are sadly conspicuous by their absence in them all. All except the Camden bath are open all the year.

I shall now pass on to a description of the tepid swimming baths of London, but, before doing so, I will first make a

few remarks on tepid swimming baths in general. If the water be but moderately heated, say not above 70° , and frequently renewed, and if the ventilation of the bath be good, swimming in it would be refreshing and salubrious, and if not possessing all the charm or all the hygienic power of open-air bathing, it may still be a health-giving exercise not altogether despicable. But if, as often happens, the water is too warm, say about 80° , seldom renewed, and the ventilation bad, in all or either of such conditions swimming, in place of being a healthy exercise, becomes just the reverse. On coming out of such a bath we feel no refreshment, but, on the contrary, we feel limp and exhausted from the heat of the sodden water which has lost all its vivifying air, and from the confined atmosphere of the bathing room, tainted with the exhalations from the bodies of the bathers. The temperature in these baths, even of the same bath at different times, is very unequal. Sometimes they are fresh and cool and apparently unmixed with warm water. I found this to be the case in one of the best of these baths one Sunday morning. I asked the attendant how it happened that the bath was so pleasantly cool, and he informed me that it was often so on a Sunday morning, as so many people came there for warm baths that there was no warm water to spare for the swimming bath. However, he added a piece of information not altogether so agreeable, to the effect that when it was deemed necessary to heat the swimming bath under these circumstances, this was often done by letting into it the water that had already been used in the warm baths. If this little manoeuvre, so naïvely revealed to me by this bath attendant, often takes place, it will fully account for the flat "wersh" feel of the water of so many of the swimming baths. But, without supposing anything so nasty, the water will readily acquire this unrefreshing character, with a number of persons bathing in it, if it be not frequently renewed. In some of the swimming baths the water is allowed to flow off every night and fresh water admitted in the morning, and in them a certain amount of freshness is always perceptible. But in many baths this excellent

plan is not adopted, and the water is either very seldom allowed to flow off entirely, or the dribbling inflow from a meagre jet and a corresponding outflow are considered sufficient. Swimming in baths of this character is neither refreshing nor wholesome. Imperfect ventilation is not such a common occurrence in the metropolitan swimming baths, for they have mostly lofty roofs and plenty of open windows. However, some of them are defective on this point, and all swimming in such a tainted atmosphere must be more prejudicial than beneficial. On the whole, however, a careful examination of the London swimming baths has convinced me that, as a rule, they are highly creditable to the parochial authorities by whom they have mostly been erected. If not equal in hygienic influence to open-air swimming baths, they are, at all events, excellent swimming schools, and, as they are to be found in every quarter of the town, and their price is extremely moderate, it is the fault of the Londoners themselves if they do not learn to swim. The art acquired even in a tepid swimming bath will be serviceable under all other circumstances; and though one accustomed to these artificially warmed shallow pools may at first feel not altogether at his ease in cold deep water, yet the power of swimming will not forsake him under these novel conditions, and familiarity will soon enable him thoroughly to enjoy a swim in river, lake or sea, and lead him to despise the languid joys of the tepid tank.

In the absence of any better classification I shall describe the swimming baths of London in alphabetical order.

Albany Swimming Bath, York Road, Lambeth.—Length of bath 17 yards; breadth 12; depth from 3 to 5 feet. 50 boxes with half doors along 3 sides of the bath. A footway all round the bath; a rude spring-board at the deeper end. The ceiling is traversed by great beams; is dark coloured and pierced by few windows. The water is of a yellowish colour, and so opaque that no part of a body immersed in it is visible. This peculiar appearance, I was told, was owing to the quantity of iron it contains. "Highly recommended by the faculty for its strengthening effects," I was informed. It would need to have some great medicinal virtues, for its appearance is not very inviting.

Alexandra Swimming Bath, Bennett Park, Blackheath.—This bath is 18 yards long by 8 wide. Sides and bottom faced with white porcelain tiles. Depth from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. Ceiling low, whitewashed. The lighting is effected by 4 dimmed windows in a recess at the shallow end, and 6 windows at one side, 5 of which open on to large square bathing boxes under a glazed roof capable of accommodating each three or four bathers. A gallery runs along the windows projecting over the bath, and opposite this is another elevated gallery or platform, on which stand 13 other bathing boxes of unequal sizes, with curtains in place of doors. Few of the boxes are provided with mirrors. There is a spring-board at the deep end, and “headers” may be taken from the platform on which stand the bathing boxes. The water is clear, but the ventilation seemed to me not very perfect, and the illumination very indifferent, for though the bath has, apparently, plenty of windows, 5 of these windows do not admit the direct light of heaven, but only the light reflected from the walls of the bathing boxes, and the other windows are dimmed and unfavorably placed for illuminating purposes. Bathing drawers are required to be worn and are supplied by the establishment.

Bermondsey Swimming Baths, Spa Road, Bermondsey.—This bath is 13 yards long by 9 wide. The sides are of white porcelain tiles, the top row having an ornamental blue pattern. Bottom of white glazed bricks. Depth from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. The ceiling, of tasteful iron work, nicely painted, forms a double slope, in which there is plenty of glass to illuminate the bath well. The bathing boxes, 34 in number, are at both ends of the bath, 18 at the deep end, in two tiers, 14 at the shallow end similarly arranged. They are roomy, neatly painted, and are provided with mirrors and curtains in place of doors. There is a broad footway in front of the boxes, and a gangway across the water at one side, leading from one end to the other, and which, being about 5 feet above the water, may be used as a spring-board. Walls painted in oil colour rise from the water on both sides. The water is quite clear. There is a second class bath precisely the same in dimensions, the only difference being that the boxes are not painted nor furnished with mirrors or curtains, and that there is no ornamental border round the top of the bath.

City of London Swimming Baths, Golden Lane, Barbican.—

These baths are situated in a squalid district, the teeming population of which seem not to avail themselves to any great extent of the facilities for ablution the establishment affords. The first class swimming bath is underground, dimly lighted by grimy windows at both ends and one side, which derive their light at second hand from other windows rising from the level of the pavement. It is about 30 yards long by 11 wide; is deepest (5 ft. 6 in.) in the centre, and shallow (3 ft. 6 in.) at either end. The sides and a few feet of the bottom at one end are paved with white porcelain tiles, the rest of the bottom with reddish tiles. The water is clear. There is no visible out-and-in flow. The bathing boxes, 20 in number, are sufficiently roomy. They seem originally to have had half doors, but only two or three of these remain. These boxes stand upon a sort of platform overhanging the bath on one side. On the opposite side is a spring-board, and another at one end. At the other end a sort of Chinese bridge without a parapet crosses the water. The ceiling is of moderate height, and consists of boards, through which project clusters of iron pipes, evidently connected with the bath and laundry arrangements above. The sides of the walls are painted over with pious texts, with which the language of the bathers at my visit did not correspond. There was a close smell about the place, which must be much intensified when the bath is full. Although the size of the bath is great, and the water clear, and at my visit not too warm, this bath is not very inviting, it being dark, ugly, and ill-ventilated. There is a second class bath here of somewhat smaller dimensions.

Greenwich Swimming Baths.—The first class bath is 17 yards long by 6 wide. Depth from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. Sides and bottom covered with a sort of asphalte painted white. Fourteen open bathing boxes painted light blue, with curtains and mirrors, along one side of the bath. Footway in front of the boxes of slate. A narrow stone ledge at deep end, and in front of it a plank across the bath for a spring board. Walls of brick, whitewashed, rise directly from the bath at the shallow end and the side opposite the boxes. Ceiling, of iron work, double slope, with glass let in at the top. Ventilation and lighting good. The second class bath is almost precisely the same, differing only in the colour of the boxes, and there being no curtains to them.

Hammersmith Swimming Bath, Bridge street, Hammersmith.—

This bath is 20 yards long by 7 wide. The sides are of white porcelain tiles with round black spots at the angles, the top row having a blue flower pattern. The bottom of white and black glazed bricks forming a pattern. Depth from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in.; 22 bathing boxes, painted drab and blue, with small mirrors and half doors, run along one side and the shallow end. The footway in front of the boxes and at the deep end is of wood, and projects over the water. A narrow stone ledge runs along the opposite side. The walls are sized stone colour. The ceiling is moderately lofty, arched, and whitewashed. Gaseliers depend from it. Daylight is admitted by two large windows in the side wall, and three semicircular windows at each end. Panes of thick unpolished glass are let into the roof all down the side where the boxes are. The illumination is good. There is a spring board at the deep end. The warm water is admitted at the surface of the water at one corner of the bath, whereby the heat is very unequally distributed. At my visit the top of the water in many parts was quite warm, while the depths of the bath were very cold. The water is clear. This bath is first class on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and second class on the other days of the week. It is an excellent bath, of good size, well lighted and ventilated, and very clean—perhaps because it is new, and the only fault to be found with it is in regard to the heating of the water, which would be better if the warm water were admitted at the bottom of the bath about its middle, in place of at the surface of the water at one end.

Kensington Swimming Bath, High Street, Kensington.—This little bath is about 10 yards long by 7 wide. It is lined, sides and bottom, with cement painted white. Depth from 3 to 5 feet. The walls, which rise straight up from the bath on three sides, are painted in imitation of stone, and are festooned all round with chains for the bathers to lay hold of. The ceiling, not very lofty, is of wood, whitewashed, pierced by six windows, which admit a good quantity of light. Four chains hang from the ceiling to near the surface of the water. The water is very clear and fresh. There are 8 boxes for bathers, entered at the back by doors, and with half doors facing the water. Stone steps lead down to the bottom of the water from these boxes, which occupy the whole of the shallow end of the bath, are rather narrow, but clean and neat, with mirrors. At one side

of the bath is a short footway projecting about 10 feet over the water. A spring-board in the middle of the deep end, and at the corners ladders for diving from. This bath, though small, is clean, well ventilated, and select.

Lambeth Swimming Baths, Westminster Bridge Road.—The first class bath is 41 yards by 15. Depth from 3 to 5 feet. The sides of the bath have a row of white porcelain tiles above, the rest of the sides and the bottom are lined with dusky tiles. The water tolerably clear. An elegant fountain in the centre admits the warm water. An aquarium at the shallow end. A lofty spring-board at the deep end, a lower one at one side. Eighty roomy boxes for bathers with half doors, running along each side of the bath. Above these, on each side, is a gallery supported on light iron pillars, with 16 superior rooms for bathers. Ceiling lofty, double slope, pierced with numerous windows, which light the bath well. A broad paved space between the boxes and the water. This is the largest first class bath in London, and is much used for swimming matches. It is well lighted and ventilated. There is a second class bath nearly as large, 38 yards by 17.

Marylebone Swimming Baths, Marylebone Road.—The first class bath is 15 yards by 8. Depth from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. It is paved with blue and white porcelain tiles arranged in a pattern. The sides are of slate slabs, with an elegant border at the top, of blue and white pattern, in porcelain tiles. The boxes, 10 in number, and provided with a complete door that closes with a spring lock, which can be opened on the inside by a handle, but on the outside only by a key, are roomy, clean, and provided with mirrors. They run along one side of the bath only, and in front of them is a footway of slate. The walls rise from the water on the other sides, and are painted imitation stone. A spring-board passes across the deep end of the bath. At the shallow end is a shell fountain of white marble, whence fresh water is always flowing into the bath with a pleasant sound. The ceiling is lofty, ridge and furrow, with many lights. This is a little gem of a bath, the water is generally fresh and clear, the lighting and ventilation excellent. It is open on Wednesdays till 2 o'clock for ladies. There are also a second and a third class bath below the level of the street, each 23 yards long, lined with blue and white porcelain tiles, well lighted by glass roofs, clean and tasteful. Accommodating respectively 30 and 40 bathers in neat, open, varnished wooden boxes.

Metropolitan Swimming Baths, Ashley Crescent, City Road.—The principal bath is 33 yards long by 11 wide. Depth from 3 ft. 10 in. to 5 ft. There is also a smaller bath 16 yards long by 9 wide, of a uniform depth of 5 feet. The large bath is lined with reddish bricks, and a row of white porcelain tiles runs round the top. The boxes, 47 in number, run down both sides and along the shallow end. They are placed two and two between pillars supporting arches. They are roomy, and are entered by a door leading from a corridor at the back. A half door opens on to the water, down to which there are wooden steps in front of each box. The boxes have no mirrors. The corridor extends all round the boxes, which are between it and the bath, so that the bath can only be entered through the boxes or at the deep end of the bath, where there is a platform and spring-board, beneath which the water is admitted, when required, in a large cascade. Ornamental colouring is applied to the pillars and arches supporting the ceiling, which is moderately lofty, flat, and whitewashed, with two circular skylights. The bath is further lighted by 22 windows looking into the corridor, placed just below the ceiling. The lighting is not so good as might be expected from the number of windows, as they are unfortunately placed. The water is clear, and the ventilation good.

The smaller bath is lined with cement painted. It is surrounded by 48 boxes with half doors placed against the wall, and there is a broad footway betwixt the boxes and the bath. Some of the boxes are in a recess at the head of the bath. There is a spring-board at one end. The water is clear, and apparently kept somewhat cooler than that in the large bath.

The Wenlock Swimming Bath, Wenlock Road, is the second class bath to the Metropolitan. It is 60 yards long and 10 wide. It can accommodate a vast number of bathers in boxes with half doors on either side and at the top, and an unlimited number of spectators in galleries above the boxes. This bath being the longest in London is much used for swimming matches. The water is very far from clear, and the arrangements are altogether very second class.

North London Swimming Baths, Pentonville Road.—The first class bath is 18 yards by 7. Depth from 3 to 4 feet; deepest in the middle. The sides are lined with white porcelain tiles with ornamented top row, the bottom paved with red tiles. There are 24 roomy bathing boxes, with mirrors, running along one

side and one end. Above these is a gallery which will accommodate bathers or spectators. A flagged footway runs in front of the boxes. At the end and side not occupied by the boxes, a spring-board runs along the whole length, and there is another spring-board near the middle of the opposite side. Three trapezes hang from the ceiling for the daring flights of amphibious Leotards. The ceiling is lofty, of dark stained wood, and glass in sufficient quantity to light the bath well. The side walls are of bare yellow brick. The water is clear, the lighting and ventilation good, but the depth of the bath is quite insufficient, and in plunging from the spring-board one must take care of one's head against the bottom. There is a second class bath somewhat smaller.

Poplar Swimming Baths, East India Dock Road.—There are two baths, first and second class, of similar dimensions, 15 yards by 9. I was unable to inspect them, as the baths close at the end of September, and my visit was made during the first days of October, when the baths were locked up, and the man who had the key was absent. They were described to me by an intelligent policeman as very nice baths—I presume of the usual character of parochial baths, of which I have examined and described so many.

Royal York Swimming Baths, York Terrace, Regent's Park.—There are two swimming baths, one for gentlemen, the other for ladies.

The gentlemen's bath is of an irregular shape, about 22 yards long by 7 wide. Depth from 3 to 5 feet. A spring-board at each end. The bath is floored with tiles of a dusky reddish-brown colour, the sides of white bricks. The bathing boxes, 20 in number, very narrow, with half doors, run along the top and down a part of one side. The walls, whitewashed, support a low ridge and furrow ceiling, with dimmed panes of glass let into it. A narrow ledge runs along one side of the bath. Small jets of water run in at one end. At my visit the plaster was peeling off the walls in patches, and green mould was creeping up the walls. This, with the low ceiling, the dim illumination, and the dismal colour of the material of which the bath is constructed, gave a gloomy and uninviting aspect to the place. Still, I am bound to say, the water was clear and pleasant.

The ladies' bath is smaller, 10 yards by 7. Depth 4 ft. 6 in.

Lined with white porcelain tiles. Platform and 6 boxes with curtains at one end. The walls, whitewashed, rise up from the bath at the other three sides, and support a not very lofty ridge and furrow ceiling pierced with a few windows. This bath, which is the only one I know of in London exclusively devoted to ladies, deserves attention on that account. It is far from being everything that is desirable, but the water is clear, and there is just room enough to learn swimming.

St. George's Swimming Bath, Davies Street, Berkeley Square.—This bath is 14 yards by 8. Depth 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. Sides paved with white porcelain tiles with black spots at angles; a top row with Greek pattern in blue, bottom of white glazed bricks. Open boxes with mirrors and half curtains, 42 in number, all round the bath. A sloppy, slippery wooden footway in front of boxes. Spring-board at deep end. Wooden steps down to the bath at the middle of one side and at one corner. Ceiling, supported on iron pillars, of painted iron work. The light comes from a large skylight at the top of a high narrow funnel with painted iron sides, and from 7 small windows over the top of the boxes on one side. The water is clear, but the lighting is very indifferent, and the ventilation decidedly defective. The wringing machine belonging to the laundry keeps up an almost incessant and very lugubrious noise. This bath is first class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and second class on the other days of the week. It is under the same management as the

St. George's Swimming Bath, Buckingham Palace Road.—This bath is 20 yards by 8. Depth from 3 ft. 4 in. to 5 ft. 4 in. Sides of white porcelain tiles with black spots at angles, and a Greek pattern in blue along the top row. Bottom of white glazed bricks. Forty-six open boxes, with half curtains and mirrors, on three sides of the bath. Wooden footway all round. Ceiling, of iron work, lofty, supported on painted iron pillars all round the bath. Lighted by a large glass roof. Spring-board at deep end. This bath is much superior in size, lighting, and ventilation, to the establishment in Davies Street. Like the latter, it is first class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and second class on other days. It closes the end of October, but the bath in Davies Street is open all the year.

St. Giles' and St. George's, Bloomsbury, Swimming Baths, Endell Street.—The first class bath has an oblong shape, broader at one

end than the other. Its length is 12 yards by 10 at the deep end, tapering off to 8 at the shallow end. Depth from 4 ft. to 6 ft. Sides lined with white porcelain tiles with round black spots at angles, a blue pattern on top row. Bottom of white glazed bricks. Twenty-three open boxes, with mirrors and curtains, on one side and along the shallow end. A wide footway of slate on three sides of the bath. A spring-board at deep end. Pillars, of painted iron, round three sides of the bath, supporting the roof. A painted screen about 12 feet high separates this from the second class bath, which is in all respects the same as the first class, except that the boxes are not painted and have neither mirrors nor curtains. The two baths have a common roof of glass, very lofty, and with elegant iron-work supports. The water is clear and fresh, the ventilation and lighting excellent. This and the Tower Hamlets bath are the only ones in London where a middle-sized man can get out of his depth, which is a great charm to the practised swimmer.

St. James' Swimming Bath, Marshall Street, Golden Square.—You mount up a flight of steps to get to this bath. It is about 13 yards by 9. Depth from 3 to 5 feet. Sides of bath slate, bottom plaster. Eighteen open boxes. A lofty ceiling, well lighted. The water is dirty looking, and the whole arrangements very inferior, and altogether second class.

St. Margaret's and St. John's Swimming Baths, Great Smith Street, Westminster.—The first class bath is 12 yards by 10. It is lined throughout, and for 3 feet above the water, with white glazed bricks. Depth from 3 ft. to 5 ft. 6 in. Boxes 16, open, with mirrors, in two tiers at the shallow end. A footway 6 feet broad in front of boxes, about 3 feet above the water, to which two flights of wooden steps lead down. A narrow gangway, about 6 feet above the water, leads to a door opening on to the second class bath, which is very similar to this, only 3 feet longer, and with double the number of boxes arranged similarly at either end. The walls, whitewashed, rise from the water on three sides. They support a lofty double sloped ceiling of painted wood, with glass let in along each slope. The water is clear, and the bath is tolerably well lighted and ventilated, but as it is deficient in everything ornamental, it has rather a mean appearance.

St. Pancras Swimming Baths, King Street, Camden Town.—The first class bath is 19 yards by 8. The corners of the bath

are rounded. The sides of white porcelain tiles, the top row ornamented with blue dolphins. The bottom is of glazed black and white bricks arranged in a pattern. Depth from 3 ft. 4 in. to 5 ft. 5 in. A spring-board at deep end. The boxes, 25 in number, with mirrors and half doors, run down one side and along deep end. At the shallow end, and in front of the boxes, a footway of stone flags. At the other side runs a screen about 10 feet high, separating it from the second class bath, which is identical with it in all respects save the mirrors and dolphins. The two baths are covered, to the extent of one half, by a very lofty glass dome. The other half of the bath is overhung by a not very lofty ceiling of plaster and ironwork, with sundry round holes in it, displaying intricate conglomerations of iron pipes. The water is beautifully clear, and the lighting and ventilation good. It is one of the most recent of the parochial baths, and does great credit to the much-reviled St. Pancras Board of Guardians.

Tower Hamlets Swimming Baths, Church Street, Mile End New Town.—First class bath 23 yards by 10. Depth from 5 to 6 feet. The sides and bottom of bath of cement painted white. Forty-two unnumbered boxes, with doors which do not lock, and are cut away slightly at top to admit light, run along the two ends and one side of the bath. Above them is a gallery with seats, where more bathers or spectators can be accommodated. On the opposite side runs a gangway over the water, which can be used as a spring-board. The footway in front of the boxes is of stone flags. The walls, of brick, are whitewashed on the three sides where the boxes are, with some attempt at colour near the top, and a gorgeous Royal Arms at one end. The other side is of wood painted, forming the partition between this and the second class bath. The roof is on the double slope, of wood, dark and grimy. Glass is let in at the top on both sides. The illumination is indifferent, the boxes rather rickety, and, on the whole, the bath, though extent and depth of water are satisfactory, is decidedly shabby. The second class bath is the same as the first, except that the boxes are open, 26 in number, and so much larger, that each box will accommodate on an emergency ten bathers. The proprietor informed me that he has seen 1200 bathers together in this bath, 500 or 600 in the water at one time. There is no attempt at colouring on the whitewashed walls, and the water is not so deep as that in the first class bath by half a foot.

Some of the above tepid swimming baths are open all the year round. Some, where there are first and second class baths, close one of these during the winter and strike an average of the prices of admission. Some close at the end of September, others at the end of October, to reopen in April. The prices of the swimming baths connected with the parochial baths and washhouses are usually 4*d.* for the 1st class and 2*d.* for the 2nd class. A few charge 6*d.* 1st class, some 3*d.* 2nd class, and one, the Marylebone, charges 8*d.* 1st, 4*d.* 2nd, and 2*d.* 3rd class. The non-parochial swimming baths, Kensington and Blackheath, are 1*s.* each.

Almost all the swimming baths are the head quarters of one or more swimming clubs, which generally have one night a week for their meetings and practisings. With few exceptions they have all attached to them a professional swimmer, in most cases one of the bath attendants, who teaches swimming to beginners and coaches aspirants after prizes in that extraordinary mode of rapid swimming adopted by the London aquatic athletes, in plunging, in picking up eggs from the bottom of the bath, and other equally useless feats. The shallowness of the baths prevents all practice of the really useful accomplishment of diving deep in water from a height or while swimming; and I am not aware of any instruction being given in the very difficult art of rescuing a drowning person. I need not say that this is a dangerous and difficult operation as long as the person to be rescued is able to struggle and clutch at his rescuer. It too often happens that the desperate efforts of a drowning person drag both himself and his would-be preserver to the bottom. In some books it is recommended not to attempt the rescue of a drowning man until he has ceased to struggle, when it may be too late. There is a method of grasping and supporting a drowning person, however lively, that should be taught to swimmers, which will enable them to save life without much peril to themselves; and this could be taught in our swimming baths, but no prizes are awarded for it, and professionals, for the most part, think only of teaching what will win prizes at the swimming competitions. By the way, either Shakspeare understood little about

swimming or he intended to represent Cassius as a vain boaster, which, however, is hardly consistent with his character in the play, when he makes him talk about rescuing the drowning Cæsar by taking him on his shoulders as Æneas did Anchises.

The above, as far as I can ascertain, are all the places expressly constructed for swimming purposes at present existing in London,* and if they fully answered the ends for which they were designed, and enabled their frequenters to obtain the full benefit of the hygienic exercise of swimming, one could scarcely say that they were too few for even such an immense town. But they are of little use in a hygienic point of view. I must remind the reader that in order to derive the full health-giving advantages from swimming, it must be performed in cool and deep water, with plenty of room, and surrounded by the wholesome accessories of fresh air and sunlight. Moreover, the mind of the swimmer should not be harassed and anxious. Now, the London swimming baths satisfy none of these requirements. They are, with one exception (for we cannot count the three ancient plunge baths among swimming baths, on account of their puny dimensions), all tepid. This is no fixed temperature, but varies in every bath, and in the same bath at different times. It may mean any temperature from 65° to 80°, or upwards. The lower temperature would not be objectionable in the point of view of salubrity, but it would not be relished by the swimmers, who would insist on more warm water being added, or otherwise the most of them would forsake the bath. When the water approaches the higher temperature indicated, swimming in it is followed by languor and prostration, more prejudicial to health than otherwise. To me

* There are, I believe, several additional tepid swimming baths in the course of construction in London and suburbs, and one has been recently opened at Stratford, but that town can scarcely be considered as part of London, though within the postal district, and as Mr. Sweedlepipe says, "we must draw the line somewhere." Some may think I have not drawn the line narrowly enough, when I have included in my survey Hampstead, Hammer-smith, Greenwich, and Blackheath, but I preferred to make it possibly too wide than to incur the reproach of having made it too narrow.

the water in this state feels sodden and lifeless, and though one can stay in it a long time without shivering, the longer one stays in the more prostrated does one feel afterwards, and a good cold douche or shower-bath would be required to restore anything like tone to the system.

The London swimming baths are all shallow, with two exceptions, and these are only six feet deep at their deepest part. There is consequently no opportunity for diving deep and experiencing the powerful influence of the pressure of a considerable column of water on the organs of respiration and circulation.

With few exceptions the London swimming baths are too small. When any considerable number of bathers are in the water, then there is hardly room for the swimmers, who are consequently continually butting against, or kicking, or even scratching one another in a manner anything but favorable for the preservation of good temper—a most essential requisite in a hygienic point of view.

None of the London baths have the advantage of pure fresh air. Some of them are close, stuffy and fœtid. The best of them can only be said to be well ventilated, but no amount of ventilation in a covered building is an equivalent for the cooler air with its fresh breezes, that play around and about the exposed body of the open air bather.

Few of the London baths have a sufficiency of light. Some are mere gloomy cellars. In the very best of them the body does not receive the direct rays of the sun, the light being transmitted through glass of greater or less thickness, often artificially dimmed, in case it should impinge too strongly on the exposed body. The powerful hygienic effects of light on the body have recently received much attention, and it is no doubt a chief agent in the salubrious influence of open-air bathing. To construct a swimming bath where the light is nearly excluded is to forego one of the greatest advantages of the bath.

Lastly, how can the mind remain free from anxiety, when, according to the arrangement in every bath in London, with one exception, the bather's clothes and valuables have to be left in open boxes, to which any person

can enter, while in most baths a notice is stuck up to the effect that the bath proprietor is not responsible for clothes or valuables, but that each bather must look after his own. In some of the baths the ticket givers will take charge of watches, jewellery, and money, but in many others they refuse to do so, and one is forced to leave everything exposed. With this alarming notice staring one in the face, what must be the state of mind of a timid bather under such circumstances, when the bath is tolerably full of the extremely mixed company which frequents these baths, I shall leave the reader to imagine. Certainly if the conditions were otherwise hygienically good, the moral state thus induced would suffice to neutralize them.

Besides the above swimming baths, cold and tepid, under cover, and not to be enjoyed without payment, London has, or had, two large open-air gratuitous swimming baths, fulfilling in many respects the requirements of hygienic swimming baths, but objectionable in several important particulars; I allude to the great bathing lake in Hyde Park—the Serpentine, and the two smaller lakes in Victoria Park.

The Serpentine, before the “levelling-up” operations commenced, was in very bad repute. Its depth was supposed to be very great in some places; a delusion its drainage has dispelled, for it appears to be nowhere above 12 or 14 feet deep. Its bottom was supposed to be foul with the accumulated sediment from the sewers which discharged themselves into it for many years; its drainage has shown it to be foul beyond all conception, and the wonder is that its water was not more impure than we know it to have been, resting on such a thick stratum of abominations. The water was impure,* there is no denying it, and its impurity was often as obvious to the nose as to the eye. And yet a swim in the old Serpentine on a cool spring or autumn morning was not a bad thing—*experto credite*. It was a fine ex-

* I suppose it was this impurity of the water which produced a remarkable disease among the young sticklebacks and minnows, many of which I have found with deposits, apparently of pus, on various parts of their bodies, rendering their movements languid and awkward, and in some cases, especially where these deposits were on the head, causing hideous disfiguration.

panse of water, with beautiful surroundings. The eye rested with pleasure on the green sward of the park, the stately old elms, the picturesque bridge, the pretty little Swiss boathouse, and the monstrous black Duke prancing over the trees. Then if you did not examine too minutely the green confervæ that rendered the water almost opaque, if you kept your eyes more skyward, if you became used to the faint ditch-water smell around you, and "made believe a good deal," you might almost fancy yourself disporting in a retired lake far away in the country. The company was not so bad as was usually supposed. The roughs don't like getting up early even to wash themselves, so there were few of them; they mostly deferred their bathing till the evening. Most of the bathers seemed quiet, steady, respectable people. The regular bathers would generally bring along with them a bit of carpet, or hire a rug from the Humane Society's boatmen to lay their clothes on, and thus save them getting wet by the dew. There was room and to spare for all on the broad bosom of London's great lake, and when you could forget the stories about the horrors below you, and refrain from looking too curiously at the green abominations that thickened the water, a long swim in the deep placid Serpentine, with the sun shining down on you, and the gentle breeze fanning you, was infinitely preferable to any cold or tepid swimming bath in London. If the lover of the swimming bath is to gain nothing by the works now going on in the Serpentine besides clear water in a shallow bed, he will, perhaps, rather regret the loss of his deep but dirty lake. Bathing was permitted in the Serpentine from 5 to 8 a.m., and again after sunset for an hour or so; but no provision at all was made for the accommodation of bathers, beyond a couple of boats belonging to the Humane Society stationed near where most bathers resorted.

Victoria Park Bathing Lakes.—There are two of these lakes. The more easterly one is nearly 300 yards long, and is surrounded by a gravel walk, beyond which are shrubs. The more westerly one is nearly as large, and is more hemmed in by trees and shrubs, and has several islands in it. Both have a depth of 6 feet in their deepest part, becoming gradually shallow towards the shore. The eastern lake is much the clearest. There is a raft on one, and a small shabby bathing house on the other. A swimming master resides at one end of the eastern lake, who apparently

adds to the profits of his profession by selling ginger-beer and sugar-plums. The time when bathing is allowed is from 4 to 8 a.m. The remainder of the day the best of the lakes is much resorted to by the owners of miniature yachts, in order to test the sailing powers of their tiny craft. There is, of course, here also no arrangement for the safe bestowal of one's clothes while one is in the water, so that, as in the Serpentine, you bathe at your own proper peril.

The lakes in these two parks are the only places in which the inhabitants of London are permitted to indulge in open-air bathing.* To be sure there is the river, and there are numerous canals in which the gamins plunge in summer, but they do so at the risk of being seized by the police and brought before a magistrate charged with the heinous offence of indecency, so that all who have any respect for the law are practically debarred from making use of these waters. Besides, in spite of the recent drainage works, the Thames is still little better than an open sewer, and it will be long before it is anything else;† and the canals are, with few exceptions, so dirty, that there is little inducement to the respectable swimmer to brave the terrors of the law, and defy the threats against trespassers, in order to indulge in his favorite exercise in either river or canal. So, practically, he is limited to the Serpentine and Victoria lakes, and to these only at the inconvenient hours, and under the uncomfortable circumstances I have described.

While almost every second-rate continental town has

* I do not forget the lower ponds of Hampstead, which were once magnificent sheets of water, but then they were the property of the New River Company, and bathing was strictly prohibited in them. Now they seem to be abandoned by the Water Company, but they have been allowed to drain away or evaporate, until they are little better than muddy pools with a broad margin of sticky clay which would deter any one except a London street Arab from attempting to bathe in them. It would be possible to convert one or more of them into excellent swimming baths of any required depth.

† Were the Thames once more the "crystal stream" that poets used to call it, I fear its tidal character would offer some difficulties to placing on it, between the bridges, floating baths, such as we see on the Seine; for these, if placed near the side, would be left high and dry at every ebb, and, if stationed in mid-stream, would seriously interfere with navigation.

ample provision for open-air bathing, it is disgraceful that a large and wealthy metropolis like London should virtually have nothing of the sort. How much pleasure do its citizens consequently lose! what a powerful hygienic agent are they not deprived of! And yet London offers more facilities than almost any other town I know of for the construction of open-air swimming baths of the best kind, and that without infringing on the comfort or privileges of any one. In the Serpentine, when the levelling operations are completed, the finest swimming baths the world can show might be constructed for a very small sum of money, and I venture to say that while the convenience and wishes of thousands who delight in swimming, and to whom an open-air bath is a source of health and pleasure, would be gratified, no person would be inconvenienced, nor would anything unpleasant be presented to the eye.

The arrangements heretofore in force pleased no one; the bathing public were put to every sort of inconvenience, and the non-bathing public were disgusted that for certain hours in the day the banks of the Serpentine should be handed over to a horde of naked savages, rendering it impossible for any decent female to venture near them. It is surely the duty of the authorities who permit bathing in the Park to provide that it may be done with safety and comfort, and without outraging decency.

I would suggest that a first and second class swimming bath be built at the south side of the Serpentine when its depth has been equalised, as proposed, to 5 ft. 6 in., shelving into shallow water towards the shore. These ought, I think, to be, not floating baths, but permanent constructions of light and elegant appearance. Each bath should be at least 150 yards long by 50 or 60 wide. Round the bath should run a platform flagged with slates, with steps down to the water, and spring-boards. There should be boxes for bathers round the whole bath, to the number of 200 or 300. These boxes should be numbered, and have complete doors, with a pane of glass let in, and closing with a spring lock, to be opened by the attendant to the bather having a corresponding ticket. This for the

security of the bather's clothes and valuables. For what right, I may ask, has any one to invite me into his bathing establishment, induce me to divest myself of my clothes and valuables, and plunge beneath the water, while he offers me no security for my property, which he directs me hang up in a perfectly open box, and cautions me to look after myself? How I am to look after it when I am swimming in or under the water he does not inform me. Even if, when so engaged, I were to perceive a thief occupied in rifling my pockets or appropriating my garments, it would avail little that *de profundis clamavi*, "stop thief!" By the time I could get out of the water and make towards him, he would probably have got clear off with his booty. Therefore, the simple plan adopted in the Marylebone first class swimming bath, of full doors closing with a spring-lock, is indispensable for the security and comfort of the bather.* To make the security absolute, it would only be requisite to provide each bather with a ticket of bone or metal, the number of which would correspond with his box; and this by a simple contrivance might be fastened to his bathing drawers (without which no one should be allowed to bathe), and the attendant would only open the door corresponding to this number. I have dwelt, in what some may think too much detail, on this apparently trivial matter, but from experience I can testify that much of the comfort of a bath depends on one being assured that one's clothes are in a place of safety. The boxes should be closed in at top with a glazed roof, as in the Hammersmith bath, and the roof, either glazed or of corrugated iron, should extend over the platform, as in a railway station, to afford shelter from sun or rain when not in the bath. The water should be quite open to sun and air. The prices of admission need not be greater—might indeed be less—than those of the generality of the parochial baths, viz. fourpence, first class, twopence, second class. For this the bather should be supplied with one or two towels, and bathing drawers,

* The proprietor of a swimming bath which has full doors inveighed against them to me as affording facilities for thieves, but then his doors have neither locks nor numbers.

unless he prefer to wear his own. And here I would hint that the towels should always be washed after being used, and not merely dried, as seems to be the case in some of the baths, if I may be allowed to infer from their sickening smell. It would surely not be too much to expect a refreshment room or buffet in connexion with these baths, as is often to be found on the continent ; such an addition would be highly desirable, if practicable.

These baths should be open from an early hour until dusk, so as to suit the convenience of all. Many persons cannot take an open-air bath in the morning without injury, but can derive benefit from, and enjoy, a swim in the middle of the day. Again, their occupations make it more convenient for some to bathe at one time, for others at another time, and the tastes and convenience of all would be consulted by having the bath open all day.

When such swimming baths are built, bathing, except in these, should be altogether forbidden in the Serpentine. Thus the non-bathing public would gain greatly by being spared the indecent scenes that have hitherto rendered that part of Hyde Park impassable for women in the morning and evening, and swimmers would have everything they could wish for. It might be a question whether bathers might not be permitted to swim from the bath in the Serpentine outside of it early in the morning. In the competitions of swimming clubs, greater space is often desirable than could be obtained in any bath.

A similar construction might be made on the eastern lake in Victoria park, which is in size, depth, and form, quite adapted for it. If the Lilliputian yachters should think their vested rights thereby interfered with, the other bathing lake might be abandoned to them entirely.

Excellent swimming baths might also be made on one of the arms at the east end of the lake in St. James's Park, without interfering with any one's rights or comfort. The water is already of the required depth, and the part indicated is but little frequented except by a few water-fowl.

The lake in Regent Park is also well adapted for a

swimming bath. There is a portion of the water, midway between the two suspension bridges, nearly hidden from every habitation by an island covered with trees, where the bath might be built so as to be in nobody's way, However, as it is quite easy to make the structure pretty, I don't see why any person should object to a full view of it.

Battersca Park possesses a large expanse of water, and a few hundred yards of it might be very well spared by the gardeners and aquatic birds, to whom it is at present dedicated, for the purpose of a large swimming bath, which would complement the gymnasia in which the park at present abounds. The water, being only about 3 feet in depth, would not be suitable for a swimming bath without further deepening, but that is an operation which, I presume, would present no difficulty. It would be a great advantage to have a continuous and steady influx and outflow of water in all these lakes; this would insure constant freshness of the swimming baths. I am not conversant with engineering matters, but I should think that this might easily be effected by means of artesian wells in suitable situations, if the flow of water cannot be obtained from the water companies.

I have thus shown how the great want of London, in the matter of open-air swimming baths, might be supplied by utilizing a portion of the water in five of the existing parks.* As there are other parks projected, or in course of formation in other parts of London, it would, of course, be easy to apply the same principle to the lakes that might be formed in them.

These baths would not interfere in any way with the existing swimming baths, for there would still remain a sufficiency of bathers who prefer tepid to cold water, and as a vastly greater number of persons would take to bathing than do now, they would, undoubtedly, first resort to the covered baths, in order to learn to swim, before frequenting the open-air baths. The covered swimming baths would

* I have purposely said nothing about the extra-urban parks of Greenwich, Wimbledon, Richmond, and Wanstead, all of which offer great facilities for the construction of swimming baths, all having fine sheets of water. I confine myself to the more pressing wants of the teeming millions of London proper.

also still be resorted to by those who prefer to swim in the evening, and by those who like to continue their bathing during the winter months.

And here I should say a few words respecting the prejudice in favour of sea-bathing, which is almost universal with us. It is believed that there is something in the sea water that renders it far more salutary than fresh water. This is undoubtedly true with respect to certain morbid states of the body—such as scrofula; but it is far from being universally true. To many persons the seaside and sea water are little else than poisonous, and bathing in the sea, or mere residence near the sea, produces very prejudicial effects. To most healthy persons it is not the contents of the water that do good, but the exercise and the reactions caused by the temperature and the other elements I have indicated above. By many swimming in the sea is preferred to swimming in fresh water for various reasons, independent of any medicinal action of its salts. They like the charm of bathing in the boundless ocean with all its romantic accompaniments; they swim with greater facility and confidence, as the greater specific gravity of salt water floats them higher. It may be urged that medical men invariably send people to the sea for bathing. That is nearly true; but then medical men are not altogether free from sharing the national prejudice in favour of the superior salubrity of sea water. Moreover, it is for patients their advice is sought, not healthy persons, and the maladies these patients are suffering from may seem to them to require the medicinal effect of sea water. But undoubtedly the chief reason for their recommendation is, that they know that there are facilities for bathing in the sea, but they would be much at a loss to name any place where their clients could obtain comfortable freshwater open-air bathing. For my own part, though I love the sea in all its moods, and in part because it has so many moods, I dislike the sticky hair and generally dirty feeling it causes, and its nasty taste when one gets a mouthful; and I would much prefer that its waters were as soft, sweet, and cleansing as those of a Scotch or Swiss lake. To my mind the

finest swimming bath in the world is the Lake of Geneva. There you have the changing moods of the ocean, while the water is fresh and sweet, and of such a lovely blue, that your body when immersed in it seems as white as marble, and, like Narcissus, you are ready to fall in love with your beautified person. Give us freshwater baths in the open air, and a removal to the seaside will not be desired or needed by many who are now attracted thither.

When speaking of the advantages of swimming in the open air, I have not meant that these advantages were limited to the male sex. On the contrary, I am strongly of opinion that swimming is an exercise equally, if not more, adapted to women as to men. Men have their hundreds of games and occupations that keep their muscles in constant and varied play. From these women are practically debarred, and the exigencies of society limit their exercises to but few, and some of these can only be enjoyed by the wealthier classes. The tyranny of fashion, too, compels them to dress themselves in a manner specially unfavorable to healthy exercise, and the consequence is that thousands fall into ill health which might be averted if their muscular system and circulation had only a fair chance. Swimming, which must be performed without the restraints of fashionable garments, is of all others the kind of exercise from which most advantage may be reaped. To most women, also, swimming comes easier than to men. Their bodies are generally of less specific gravity, and so float more easily in water, whether fresh or salt. This being so they sooner acquire the confidence necessary to make good swimmers. Then, as the water sustains the whole weight of the body, and as they are no longer restrained by the bands, bones and laces of their dress, they are free to bring into full play, without fatigue, all those muscles which have hitherto been kept in thrall by the milliner's devices.

As a means of maintaining and even restoring health, then, swimming in the open air is of still greater importance to women than to men. But I have shown that even in the matter of tepid swimming baths the wants of the other sex have been almost totally ignored, for with the

exception of the little bath in York Terrace and the Wednesday morning's use of the smallest of the Marylebone baths, there is actually no provision in London for women's swimming. As far as regards open-air swimming they have been left out of consideration altogether. Now, if open-air swimming baths are to be established in London, the interests of the softer sex should be considered as much as those of the rougher gender. With this view I would give up the Regent's Park lake to the ladies, for which it is already adapted by its inferior depth—4 feet, I believe. For the same reason it may perhaps be thought best to make the proposed bath in St. James's Park one for ladies only, and if the bath in the Serpentine be only made large enough, there is ample space there for all the wants of the male sex at that end of the town.* The water in Victoria Park in its present condition is, of course, better adapted for a men's bath, but in the event of a women's bath being required there, which I doubt not will be the case, one of the other lakes might be given up for the purpose, or a new lake altogether constructed, for which there is room enough in the park.

When women take to swimming, as I have no doubt they will eagerly when opportunity offers, they will, of course, have to abandon their useless and inconvenient bathing gowns and adopt the dress universally worn by their sisters on the continent, or something equally well adapted to allow free play to the limbs.

When London sets the example, our provincial towns will soon follow its lead, and when once open-air swimming baths become general throughout the land, we may hope one day to cease to deserve the reproach—that though we live in a sea-surrounded and lake and river-abounding country, a much smaller proportion of its inhabitants can swim well than is to be found in many continental countries which have none of our aquatic advantages.

* If it is considered desirable to limit the construction of swimming baths at first to the Serpentine, a ladies' swimming bath might be made in the portion of it contained in Kensington Gardens.

